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# FATE AND POSSIBILITY IN EARLY STOIC PHILOSOPHY

MARGARET E. REESOR

THE STOIC CONCEPTS of fate and possibility in Physics depended ultimately upon the distinction which the Stoics made between principal and initiating causes. In this paper I hope to prove that "possibility" is to be found in the principal cause, which was a quality and the cause of a predicate, and that a "possible" event was one which followed from the principal cause. I wish to show also, that the term "fate" was applied to both the principal and the initiating cause. When it was used to refer to the principal cause, it denoted only its relationship to its substratum. On the other hand, all initiating causes which included particulars and events external to the object, and the circumstances in which the object was placed, were according to fate.<sup>1</sup>

Since there is a close connection between Stoic Physics and Logic it will be necessary to consider the evidence given for the views of Cleanthes and Chrysippus by their criticisms of the Master Argument of Diodorus Cronus, a Megarian philosopher who was born about 350 B.C. The Master Argument contained three propositions dealing with the necessary and the possible, which were considered to be incompatible. Since Cleanthes and Chrysippus each rejected a different proposition, and since both disagreed with Diodorus Cronus, I shall point out the differences in the treatment of this subject by the two Stoic philosophers, and I shall show how Chrysippus' interpretation of the Master Argument was related to his Physics.

Later we shall see that the definitions of the possible, non-necessary, necessary, and impossible in Stoic Logic are in complete accord with their concepts of possibility and fate in Physics. In fact, definitions in Logic which would be otherwise unintelligible become clear when they are viewed in the light of Physics. The close connection which I shall demonstrate between these two aspects of Stoic philosophy will, I hope, justify my inclusion of the logical propositions in my paper. The Stoics themselves insisted that the three divisions of their philosophy, Physics, Logic, and Ethics were inseparable, and that no part was independent of the other two (D. L. 7.40; cf. Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.19).

<sup>1</sup>The fragments of the philosophers of the old Stoa have been collected by H. von Arnim in his *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1921). I have referred to this collection by the number of the book and fragment, e.g., 2.193.

I would like to thank my colleagues S. E. Smethurst and M. W. Edwards for their helpful comments on this paper. The responsibility for errors and omissions is my own.

What did the Stoics mean by the term “quality”? It was used to describe the Stoic Logos—the divine element in animate and inanimate objects. To say what the Logos was required an enumeration of qualities. For instance, man might be said to have the qualities which are inherent in inanimate objects such as weight, breadth, height, and colour; others found in plants and animals such as life, growth, reproduction, locomotion, and sensation; and the quality which is present only in man, intelligence.<sup>2</sup> All these qualities were aspects of the Logos, and were caused by its presence in the object. This interpretation is amply supported by passages found in the writings of the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus. The Logos is called hardness in iron, solidity in stone, and the white sheen in silver (2.449). It is also mind, soul, nature, and disposition (1.158). As disposition it is found in bones and sinews; as mind it is present in the intelligence and in the aether (2.634). Although each quality was a manifestation of the divine power which the Stoics termed Logos, the Logos was not limited to any one quality, but was the totality of all qualities in the universe. There was no God apart from the Logos. God is the Logos in its purest form—the rational intelligence of man (1.564).

Each quality can be described as a substratum “in a certain disposition,” or as a substratum with a qualification. For example, the soul is “*pneuma* in a certain disposition” (πνεῦμα πῶς ἔχον, 2.806), and virtue is “reason in a certain disposition” (τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν πῶς ἔχον, Sext. Emp. *Eth.* 2.23). Chrysippus argued in his work *Concerning the fact that the virtues are qualified* that the verbal adjectives “to be chosen” (αἰρετέον), “to be done” (ποιητέον), and “to be confident” (θαρρητέον) each indicated a different good (3.256). This meant that a particular virtue such as moderation was virtue with the qualification “to be chosen” and courage was virtue with the qualification “to be confident.”<sup>3</sup>

The substratum, however, was itself a quality. The Stoics recognized a hierarchy of qualities, in which each quality was a substratum for another quality. For instance, in the soul we find the following order of substrata: *pneuma* (2.806), soul, reason (Sext. Emp. *Eth.* 2.23), virtue (3.259), and the particular virtue (3.256), and all of these are qualities. Since the substratum was a quality, an analysis of Stoic Physics is an analysis of qualities.

The relationship between the quality and its substratum was according to fate. In a very important passage in Nemesius a long list of qualities is said to be according to fate (καθ’ εἰμαρμένην). They include the power of water to become frozen, of a plant to bear a certain kind of fruit, the downward movement of a stone, the upward movement in fire, assent

<sup>2</sup>In 2.826 assent (συγκατάθεσις) and impulse (δρμή) are said to be qualities of the intelligence.

<sup>3</sup>See my article, “The Stoic Categories,” *AJP* 78 (1957) 67–68.

(συγκατάθεσις) and impulse (δρμή) in a living creature (2.991, cf. 979). Nemesis argued that because the Stoics held that qualities such as assent and impulse were given to us by fate, the assent and impulse were controlled by fate. His argument is refuted, however, by passages from Alexander of Aphrodisias (2.979 and 984), where the Stoics are quoted as saying that impulse is in the power of the animal. When the Stoics asserted that impulse and assent were given to us by fate, they meant that the power of giving assent was in the substratum “man” according to fate. The giving or withholding of assent in particular circumstances was controlled by the man himself. Since the quality was present in the substratum according to fate, the hierarchy of substrata and qualities which we find in Stoic Physics was according to fate.

The qualities were powers capable of producing an effect, or responsible for a predicate. Zeno argued that the Logos was corporeal (1.153, cf. 146), and defined the term as that which can act or be acted upon (1.90). Since the qualities were identical with the Logos, the qualities also were corporeal. The term “predicate” referred to an incorporeal action (Archedemus 3.8), such as “living” or “being moderate.” These actions or events were not corporeal since they could not act or be acted upon. The predicates were classified as speech (λεκτόν), and were denoted by the articular infinitive and the verb. For example, Zeno named practical wisdom (φρόνησις) as the cause of being wise (τὸ φρονεῖν), soul (ψυχή) of living (τὸ ζῆν), and moderation (σωφροσύνη) of being moderate (τὸ σωφρονεῖν, 1.89), and Archedemus of Tarsus wrote that a cause was the cause of a predicate such as “is cut” (τέμνεται, 3.8). Practical wisdom, soul and moderation, as we have seen, were qualities.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear, however, that the quality in itself is not sufficient to bring about an actual event. “Practical wisdom” (φρόνησις) is the cause of “being wise” (τὸ φρονεῖν), but the real event “This man is wise,” requires a specific situation in which a choice is made. To use another example, Oedipus’ decision to kill Laius was not the sole cause of his death; a chain of circumstances, such as the fact that Oedipus had a weapon, that he met Laius on a narrow road, and that Laius refused to move

<sup>4</sup>E. Bréhier, *Etudes de philosophie antique* (Paris 1955) 106, argued that there is no relation of cause and effect in Stoic philosophy, on the grounds that a cause can only be the cause of an incorporeal predicate which is not a substance or a quality. On the basis of 2.349 he asserted that a cause is the cause of a predicate to the object. This can be answered, I believe, by statements to the effect that a quality is formed from the predicate. Simplicius referred to those who formed the qualities from predicates. Roofing is the result of having been roofed; equality is derived from equalization, and corporeality from the fact that a body exists (C. Kalbfleisch, *Simplicii in Arist. Cat. Commentarium* [Berlin 1907] 216.19 ff.). This would mean, for example, that a knife could be the cause of “being round” to X, that roundness in X would be derived from “being round,” and that this roundness might be the cause of its being selected for a certain purpose.

aside, was also a cause. The actual event, therefore, requires two causes, one which is part of the nature of an object, and one or more which are external to it.

This analysis of reality is reflected in the Stoic distinction between principal and initiating causes. The principal causes were qualities. If a man should push a round body, the push would be the initiating cause, but the roundness of the object would be the principal cause of its movement (2.974). Similarly, a visual object would be the initiating cause of sight, but the assent (*adsensio* = *συγκατάθεσις*) would be the principal cause, and would be free to accept or reject the object (*ibid.*). "Roundness" and "assent" which are here termed principal causes were, of course, qualities (2.826). What were the initiating causes? A particular, such as a man or a knife, may be an initiating cause. In the example above, the man who pushes the round body is the initiating cause of its movement (2.974). In a passage in which the Stoics are quoted by Sextus Empiricus as arguing that every cause is a cause to another body of something incorporeal, the knife is said to be the cause to the flesh of the incorporeal predicate "being cut" (2.341). A visual object or representation would also be an initiating cause. In our previous example a visual object is said to be the initiating cause of sight (2.974).<sup>5</sup>

It is because of the initiating cause that an event is said to be according to fate. Cicero quotes Chrysippus as writing, "Therefore, when we say that all things happen by fate according to antecedent causes, what we intend to be understood is this, namely that it is by supporting and preceding causes, not by complete and principal causes (2.974)." Since every actual event requires an initiating cause, every actual event is according to fate. Initiating causes of various types formed a network of causes external to the principal causes. They are also the antecedent causes of an event (2.952). This pattern of causes and effects was called fate (2.933).

By admitting that some things which are according to fate are not according to foresight (2.933), Cleanthes appears to have acknowledged that a fated event was not necessarily good. Chrysippus, however, rejected this distinction. He held that each particular and each event formed part of a plan which was good, and which was not subject to any impediment or hindrance (2.935). Each part fits into the whole by being what it is even if by being what it is it may fail to realize its own nature. For instance, if a particular is sick or maimed, it fails to realize its natural health or soundness, but the sickness is part of the common plan (2.937). Vice itself served some purpose in the whole (2.1181).

<sup>5</sup>Since Zeno stated that a cause was corporeal (1.89), and since the predicate and proposition are incorporeal, Bréhier, *op. cit.* (see n.4) 113–116 argued that the proposition cannot be a cause.

The conflict between the good of the whole and the good of the part explains many statements in Stoic Philosophy to the effect that a man follows fate unwillingly. Cleanthes in his *Hymn to Zeus* expressed this feeling in the words, *ὡς ἔψομαι γ' ἄοκνος* (1.527) and Chrysippus drew the famous analogy of a dog tied behind a cart which he must follow willingly or reluctantly (2.975).<sup>6</sup> The Stoic is portrayed as a man struggling against or following unwillingly the fate which may involve his own suffering or sorrow, but which will form part of the total good.

Where, then, is possibility in Stoic Physics? An important passage in Cicero's *De Fato* (13 = 2.954) may throw some light on the problem. "You (Chrysippus)," Cicero wrote, "say that what is not going to happen can happen, so that this gem can be broken, even if it is never going to be, and that it would not have been necessary for Cypselus to reign at Corinth, although that had been prophesied by the oracle of Apollo a thousand years before." "This gem is broken" and "Cypselus will not reign at Corinth" were possible events. The predicates "is broken" and "will not reign" follow from the principal causes "breakable" and "assent" (*συγκατάθεσις*), since "breakable" is the cause of "is broken" and "assent" is the cause of "will not reign." Because the events may never be realized, no initiating causes are involved. Possibility, therefore, must be found in the principal cause, and a possible event is one in which the predicate is derived from the principal cause.

In investigating the concepts of possibility and fate in early Stoic Physics we have reached the following conclusions. Possibility is present in the principal cause (e.g., breakable) as the cause of a predicate (e.g., being broken or is broken) which may or may not be realized. A possible event (e.g., the gem is broken) is one in which the predicate (e.g., is broken) follows from the principal cause (e.g., breakable) of the entity, but which may or may not come to pass.<sup>7</sup> Fate is to be found in the relation of a principal cause to its substratum (e.g., the power of a plant to bear a certain kind of fruit to the plant). In the case of a quality such as intelligence, however, although the intelligence exists in the substratum "man" according to fate, the exercise of intelligence is within the power of the man himself. Fate is also found in the network of initiating causes, external to the principal cause, and either contemporary with it or prior to it, which might cause the predicate derived from the principal cause to be realized, or which might prevent it from being realized. These are the conditions in which the object is found, and over which the object has no control. Since every actual event has an initiating cause, every actual event is according to fate.

<sup>6</sup>For a full discussion of this point of view see M. W. Edwards, "The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the *Aeneid*," *Phoenix* 14 (1960) 151-154.

<sup>7</sup>For the non-necessary see below, page 292.

It now remains to discuss possible and necessary propositions in Stoic Logic; but first we must consider the evidence for Cleanthes' and Chrysippus' views on the Master Argument of the Megarian philosopher, Diodorus Cronus. The Master Argument consisted of three propositions which may be translated as follows:

- (1) "Everything true about the past is necessary."
- (2) "The impossible does not follow from the possible."
- (3) "That which neither is true nor will be true is possible."

The propositions were held to be incompatible. Diodorus Cronus rejected the third; the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes the first; and Chrysippus the second.<sup>8</sup>

Diodorus Cronus argued that all events in past time were necessary, and that a true proposition in the past was necessary. He maintained, for instance, that if a man should die at sea, he could not have received death on land.<sup>9</sup> Further, a possible event is one which happens at some point in present or future time, and a possible proposition is one in which the event referred to takes place at some point in present or future time. For instance, the proposition, "I am in Corinth," according to Diodorus is possible if I am in Corinth, or if I am going to be in Corinth.<sup>10</sup> An event which does not take place was never possible.<sup>11</sup>

Since Cleanthes rejected the first proposition of the Master Argument,

<sup>8</sup>The Master Argument of Diodorus Cronus is found in Epictetus, *Diss.* (Loeb edition, New York 1946) 2.19.1 = 1.489 and reads as follows: ὁ κυριεύων λόγος ἀπὸ τοιούτων τινῶν ἀφορμῶν ἠρωτῆσθαι φαίνεται. κοινῆς γὰρ οὐσης μάχης τοῖς τρισὶ τούτοις πρὸς ἄλληλα τῷ πᾶν παρεληλυθὸς ἀληθὲς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι καὶ τῷ δυνατῷ ἀδύνατον μὴ ἀκολουθεῖν, καὶ τῷ δυνατὸν εἶναι ὃ οὐτ' ἔστιν ἀληθὲς οὐτ' ἔσται, συνιδὼν τὴν μάχην ταύτην ὃ Διόδωρος τῇ τῶν πρώτων δυεῖν πιθανότητι συνεκρήσατο πρὸς παράστασιν τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι δυνατόν, ὃ οὐτ' ἔστιν ἀληθὲς οὐτ' ἔσται. At the end of this passage Epictetus states that Cleanthes accepted the second and third propositions, rejecting the first, but that Chrysippus adopted the first and third but not the second. For a discussion of this passage see. E. Zeller, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (1910) 252-262; L. Guillemit and J. Vuillemin, *Le sens du destin* (Neuchatel 1948) 47-50; A. Virieux-Reymond, *La logique et l'épistémologie des stoiciens* (Chambéry 1950) 198-202; B. Mates, *Stoic Logic* (University of California Publications in Philosophy 26; Berkeley 1953) 38-41; W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford 1962) 117-128; Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, *Le dominateur et les possibles* (Paris 1960) *passim*.

<sup>9</sup>Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis De Interpretatione* edited by C. Meiser (Leipzig 1877) 235.4-8: *Sed si omnia ex necessitate fiunt, in Diodori sententiam non rectam sine ulla dubitatione veniendum est. Ille enim arbitratus est, si quis in mari moreretur, eum in terra mortem non potuisse suscipere.*

<sup>10</sup>Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Anal. Pr. I*, edited by M. Wallies (Berlin 1838) 184.2-4: τὸ γὰρ ἐμὲ ἐν Κορίνθῳ γενέσθαι δυνατόν κατ' αὐτόν, εἰ εἶην ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἢ εἰ πάντως μέλλοιμι ἔσεσθαι. εἰ δὲ μὴ γενοίμην, οὐδὲ δυνατόν ἦν. καὶ τὸ τὸ παιδίον γενέσθαι γραμματικὸν δυνατόν, εἰ πάντως ἔσοιτο.

<sup>11</sup>Schuhl, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 10-13.



"Everything true about the past is necessary," we know that he did not regard an event in past time as a necessary event, and that he did not believe that a true proposition about the past was necessary. A clear distinction between a true proposition and a necessary one is made also in a passage in Alexander of Aphrodisias which Schuhl has attributed to Cleanthes.<sup>12</sup> In this it is argued that the proposition, "There will be a naval battle to-morrow," can be true without being necessary, for the necessary is that which is always true but this statement no longer remains true when the naval battle takes place (2.961). Since Chrysippus too seems to have regarded a true proposition in the future as not necessary, the attribution to Cleanthes is doubtful.<sup>13</sup>

Chrysippus agreed with Diodorus Cronus in asserting that a true proposition in the past was necessary. It was necessary, however, because it described an actual event with initiating causes, and these initiating causes were according to fate. By recognizing the quality as a principal cause, and the cause of a predicate which might or might not come to pass, Chrysippus was able to maintain that events which would never occur were possible, and that a proposition describing an event which would never be realized was possible. In this way he was able to accept the first and third propositions of the Master Argument.<sup>14</sup>

In Logic the Stoic definitions of the possible, non-necessary, necessary, and impossible are found in Boethius' *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis De Interpretatione* and in Diogenes Laertius. The definitions of the possible read as follows:<sup>15</sup> "The possible is that which is capable of receiving the predicate *true* if those things which, although they are external to it, happen to occur with it, do not prevent it," and "The possible is that which admits of being true if the external circumstances do not prevent it from being true, as, for example, 'Diocles lives.'" We can conclude, therefore, that the proposition, "Diocles lives," is possible, if it is such

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.* 24.

<sup>13</sup>For the distinction between a true proposition and a necessary one see below, page 293.

<sup>14</sup>Chrysippus may have been influenced by the views of Philo of Megara. Like Chrysippus, Philo argued that that which may occur but never does occur is possible, and spoke of external circumstances as preventing that which has "fitness" (*ἐπιτηδεύσης*) for existing from existing. He used as examples, "A piece of wood in the Atlantic Ocean is combustible," and "A shell at the bottom of the sea is perceptible." For an account of Philo's modality see Mates, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 40–41. The most important ancient sources are Simplicius *In Arist. Cat. Comm.* 195–196; Alexander *In Arist. Anal. Pr. I* 184; and Boethius *Comm. in Arist. De Interp.* 234.

<sup>15</sup>Boethius *ibid.* 234.27–29 = 2.201: *Stoici vero possibile quidem posuerunt, quod susceptibile esset verae praedicationis nihil his prohibentibus, quae cum extra sint cum ipso tamen fieri contingunt.* D.L. 7.75 = 2.201: *δυνατόν μὲν τὸ ἐπιδεκτικὸν τοῦ ἀληθὲς εἶναι, τῶν ἐκτὸς μὴ ἐναντιουμένων πρὸς τὸ ἀληθὲς εἶναι, οἷον "ἥ Διοκλῆς."*



that it may receive the predicate "true" when external circumstances such as sickness or accident do not prevent it from being true.<sup>16</sup>

The possible proposition is one which refers to an event which may or may not be realized. This is made clear not only by the definitions quoted above but by the fact that both Cleanthes and Chrysippus accepted the third proposition of the Master Argument, "That which neither is true nor will be true is possible."<sup>17</sup>

The example of a possible proposition given by Diogenes Laertius, "Diocles lives," supports the point of view we stated earlier, that a possible event is one in which the predicate is derived from the principal cause or quality. In the examples from Zeno's writings which we quoted above, the quality, soul, is said to be the cause of living (τὸ ζῆν, 1.89). Since the quality was the cause of both the articular infinitive and the finite verb, soul is also the cause of "lives."<sup>18</sup> It must follow, therefore, that the proposition "Diocles lives" is derived from soul,<sup>19</sup> which is a quality or principal cause of Diocles.<sup>20</sup>

Diogenes' definition of the non-necessary may be translated as follows: "The non-necessary is that which is both true and capable of being false if external circumstances do not prevent it as, for example, 'Dion walks.'"<sup>21</sup> No definition of the term is given by Boethius. The difference between possible and non-necessary propositions lies in the nature of the

<sup>16</sup>Sextus Empiricus argued that in Stoic Philosophy the proposition (ἀξιωμα) is true if the predicate belongs to that which falls under the demonstrative, that is to the subject (Sext. Emp. *Math.* 8.100). Diogenes Laertius stated more simply that a proposition is true if it corresponds to an event; e.g., "It is day" is true if it is day (D.L. 7.65). Truth which was a disposition of the intelligence (2.132) was the cause of a proposition's being true. The judgment as to whether it is true or not was made by the faculty of comprehension (φαντασία καταληπτική) and was infallible (2.56). The Stoics followed Aristotle (*De An.* 430a27 ff. and 432a12 ff.) in arguing that the proposition rather than the sensation or the event was true (Sext. Emp. *Math.* 8.10). On this point see J. Chevalier, *Histoire de la pensée* 1 (Paris 1953) 423. For the Stoic concept of truth see Mates, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 33–36, and Kneale, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 149–153.

<sup>17</sup>Mrs. Kneale, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 124 defined the possible as follows: "The possible is that which admits of truth, or that which, while admitting of truth, is not prevented from being true by external circumstances." The second half of her statement appears to be wrong since it contradicts 2.954, as well as the third proposition of the Master Argument.

<sup>18</sup>See above, page 287.

<sup>19</sup>See Archedemus 3.8, where it is stated that a cause is the cause of a proposition such as, "The ship is."

<sup>20</sup>A. Faust, *Der Möglichkeitsgedanke* 1 (Heidelberg 1931) 269, cf. 249, 259 and 271, argued that possibility in Stoic Philosophy was a logical and not a physical concept. He held that Stoic Physics dealt only with the necessary, and that the inadequacy of our judgment was responsible for our statements about the possible and the non-necessary. With this view I emphatically disagree and hope that I have shown in this paper that physical possibility is to be found in the quality as a power.

<sup>21</sup>D.L. 7.75 = 2.201: οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον δέ ἐστιν ὃ καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν καὶ ψεῦδος οἶον τε εἶναι, τῶν ἐκτὸς μηδὲν ἐναντιουμένων, οἶον τὸ "περιπατεῖ Δίῳν."

predicate. In a non-necessary proposition the predicate corresponds to the Aristotelian accident and is not derived from the principal cause. It may or may not be realized.

The Stoic definitions of the necessary and of the impossible which are found in Boethius and in Diogenes Laertius are also in accord with Chrysippus' philosophy. The necessary was defined in Boethius as "That which, being true, in no way receives the predicate *false*," and in Diogenes as "That which, being true, does not admit of being false, or which does admit of it, but external circumstances prevent it from being false: as, for example, 'Virtue benefits.'" <sup>22</sup>

The example given by Diogenes, "Virtue benefits," belongs to the first part of his definition. "Benefiting" is a principal cause inhering in its substratum, virtue, and the cause of the predicate "benefits." As we have seen above, the quality or principal cause exists in its substratum by fate. <sup>23</sup> "Virtue benefits," therefore, is a necessary proposition because the predicate is derived from the principal cause inherent by fate in the subject.

What would be an example of the second part of Diogenes' definition? Perhaps a true proposition about the past such as, "The gem was broken," or "I was in Corinth," since we know that Chrysippus accepted the first proposition of the Master Argument of Diodorus Cronus, "Everything true about the past is necessary." A proposition about the past was probably regarded as necessary because it is prevented from being false by external circumstances. These, as we have seen, are the initiating causes in Chrysippus' system of Physics.

If a necessary proposition corresponded to an actual event in past time which involved both principal and initiating causes (e.g., "I was in Corinth"), a proposition in the future could not be necessary although it might be true. The assumption that a true proposition in the future was not necessary appears to be at the heart of Chrysippus' treatment of oracles. Oracles were infallible, and could not be circumvented. Chrysippus used as an example the parents of Oedipus and Paris who were not able to prevent the fulfilment of an oracle although they exposed their children (2.939). On the other hand, the freedom of the individual was not restricted by the oracle. Although the oracle told Oedipus that he would murder his father, Oedipus was still free in his decision to murder Laius or spare his life. As Chrysippus asserted, it would not have been necessary for Cypselus to reign at Corinth, although that had been

<sup>22</sup>Boethius *Comm. in Arist. De Interp.* 235.3-4: *Necessarium autem, quod cum verum sit falsam praedicationem nulla ratione suscipiat.* D.L. 7.75 = 2.201: ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἔστιν ὅπερ ἀληθὲς ὃν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιδεκτικὸν τοῦ ψεύδους εἶναι, ἢ ἐπιδεκτικὸν μὲν ἔστι, τὰ δ' ἐκτὸς αὐτῶ ἐναντιοῦνται πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος εἶναι, οἷον "ἡ ἀρετὴ ὠφελεῖ."

<sup>23</sup>See above, page 286.

prophesied by the oracle of Apollo a thousand years before (2.954). The oracles foretold what would come to pass; the individuals concerned made the decisions which fulfilled the oracles and were responsible for those decisions. By asserting that a true oracle in the future was not necessary, Chrysippus was able to maintain that the individual exercised free will.

The objection was raised by the critics of the Stoics that an event foretold in an oracle would come to pass regardless of circumstances. For instance, if the oracle stated that Oedipus would be born of Laius, they argued that this would happen whether Laius had a wife or not. Chrysippus called oracles of this type complex and argued that the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of the oracle were implicit in the oracle itself (2.956, 998, 943, 978). In other words, the oracle, "Oedipus will be born of Laius," was equivalent to "Oedipus will be born of the wife of Laius."

Although an oracle consisting of a simple proposition could be reconciled with free will, a conditional oracle could not. For instance, in an oracle such as, "If anyone is born under the rising dog-star, he will not die at sea," the relationship between the two clauses would be that of the sign to that which is signified, and there would be a necessary connection between the two.<sup>24</sup> Chrysippus reworded the oracle to read, "Not both: some one is born under the rising dog-star, and he will die at sea" (*De Fato* 15 = 2.954). Although the circumlocution aroused the scorn of Cicero, it has some meaning and significance. The problem was not merely the logical one of recognizing the relationship between two clauses. Chrysippus maintained that every proposition was true or false, and argued from this that there was no event without a cause. All things which happen are due to antecedent causes or fate (2.952). There is, therefore, one chain of causes which leads to the proposition, "He will be born under the rising dog-star," and another which leads to the proposition, "He will die at sea." According to Chrysippus the oracle foretold that only one proposition was true and that only one series of events would come to pass.

More difficult is the interpretation of the Stoic definitions of the impossible given by Diogenes Laertius and Boethius:<sup>25</sup> "The impossible

<sup>24</sup>Chevalier, *op. cit.* (see n.16) 425 argued that necessity in Stoic Logic is to be found in the relationship between a true antecedent proposition (the sign) and a true consequent (that which is signified) in a true conditional sentence (e.g., If she has milk, she has conceived). He maintained also that the connection between sign and signified parallels cause and effect in Stoic Physics. For a refutation of this argument see Bréhier, *op. cit.* (see n.4) 113–114.

<sup>25</sup>D.L. 7.75 = 2.201: ἀδύνατον δὲ ὃ μὴ ἐστὶν ἐπιδεκτικὸν τοῦ ἀληθὲς εἶναι, οἷον "ἢ γῆ ἵπταται." Boethius *Comm. in Arist. De Interp.* 235.1–3: *Impossibile autem, quod nullam umquam suscipiat veritatem aliis extra eventum ipsius prohibentibus.*

is that which does not admit of being true, as, for example, 'The earth is flying,' " and "The impossible is that which never admits of any truth since other things outside prevent the realization of it."<sup>26</sup>

The example used by Diogenes, "The earth is flying," is an impossible proposition because the predicate is the contradictory of the principal cause (i.e., stationary) which forms part of the definition of earth. As an example of a proposition illustrating Boethius' definition, I would suggest an untrue proposition in past time such as, "I was in Corinth." This would be prevented from being true by external circumstances.<sup>27</sup>

Another example of an impossible proposition is found in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Commentary on Aristotle's Prior Analytics*. Referring to the fact that Chrysippus rejected the second proposition of the Master Argument, "The impossible does not follow from the possible," he states that Chrysippus used as an example the conditional, "If Dion is dead, this man is dead," in which the pronoun "this" referred to Dion, and argued that the antecedent was possible and the consequent impossible. The consequent is what Chrysippus called a "destroyed term" (τὸ φθειρόμενον).<sup>28</sup> The word seems to have designated a combination of subjects and predicate which is impossible. In this case Greek usage did not allow the application of the demonstrative "this" to a corpse. The consequent, therefore, might be translated as, "This living man is dead." It belongs to the same class of propositions as Diogenes' example, "The earth is flying."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Mrs. Kneale, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 124 argued that "other things" are external circumstances and defined the impossible as "that which does not admit of truth or that which, while admitting of truth, is prevented from being true by external circumstances." The second part of her definition, however, is simply a definition of the possible, for the possible as, for example, a proposition such as "The gem will be broken," may admit of being true but be prevented from being true by external circumstances. See above, page 292.

<sup>27</sup>Faust, *op. cit.* (see n.20) 284, held a similar view. He maintained that if every event in past time is necessary, an event which did not take place is impossible.

<sup>28</sup>In *Arist. Anal. Pr. I* 177.37-44 = 2.202a: Χρύσιππος δὲ λέγων μηδὲν κωλύειν καὶ δυνατῷ ἀδύνατον ἔπεσθαι—φησὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ συνημμένῳ τῷ "εἰ τέθνηκε Δίων, τέθνηκεν οὗτος" δεικνυμένου τοῦ Δίωνος ἀληθεῖ ὄντι τὸ μὲν ἡγούμενον (τὸ) "τέθνηκε Δίων" δυνατὸν εἶναι τῷ δύνασθαι ποτε ἀληθὲς γενέσθαι τὸ τεθνηκέναι Δίωνα, τὸ δὲ "τέθνηκεν οὗτος" ἀδύνατον. ἀποθανόντος γὰρ Δίωνος φθείρεσθαι τὸ ἀζώνωμα τὸ "οὗτος τέθνηκε" μηκέτ' ὄντος τοῦ τὴν δέξιον ἀναδεχομένου. ἐπὶ γὰρ ζῶντος καὶ κατὰ ζῶντος ἡ δέξις.

<sup>29</sup>Faust, *op. cit.* (see n.20) 275, Virieux-Reymond, *op. cit.* (see n.8) 199, and Chevalier, *op. cit.* (see n.16) 426 interpreted Chrysippus' rejection of the second proposition of the Master Argument, "The impossible does not follow from the possible," to mean that a possible proposition may be proved to be impossible in the course of time. For example, the proposition, "She will be in Corinth before she is six years old," is possible, but if this does not take place by her seventh year, it is an impossible proposition. (The example is my own.) There is no ancient evidence to support this interpretation.

My argument, so far, has been directed to prove the close correspondence between Possibility and Fate in Stoic Physics and the possible and the necessary in Stoic Logic. In Physics possibility is found in the principal cause (e.g., breakable), which was a quality inseparable from its substratum (e.g., gem), and the cause of a predicate (e.g., is broken) which may or may not be realized; and a possible event is one in which the predicate is derived from the principal cause but which may or may not be realized (e.g., The gem is broken). In Logic a proposition in which the predicate (e.g., is broken) follows from the principal cause (e.g., breakable) is possible whether it will be realized or not (e.g., The gem is broken).

In Physics the word "fate" is used to describe both the relationship of the principal cause to its substratum, and the chain or series of initiating causes which might cause the predicate derived from the principal cause to be realized or which might prevent it from being realized. All actual events are according to fate because they have an initiating cause. In Logic a proposition such as "Virtue benefits" is necessary because the predicate states the principal cause of the subject, and a true proposition about the past is necessary because it is prevented from being false by external circumstances, the initiating causes of Chrysippus' Physics. A true proposition in the future could not be necessary.

The terms "impossible" and "non-necessary" are found only in passages dealing with Logic, but their correlation with Physics can be clearly seen. An impossible proposition is one in which the predicate is the contradictory of the principal cause (e.g., The earth is flying), or an untrue proposition in past time (e.g., I was in Corinth). A non-necessary proposition is such that the predicate is an accident and is not derived from the principal cause. It may or may not be realized (e.g., The gem is stolen).

What, then, is the significance of Possibility and Necessity in Stoic philosophy? Possibility is inherent in the Stoic Logos, a power and a cause, immanent in all nature animate and inanimate, which cannot be destroyed apart from the destruction of the substratum in which it inheres. The Logos was the Stoic God, and the intelligence of the wise man. A man had the power of choice and through the exercise of decision remained free. A true oracle, which could never have the force of necessity, merely foretold what the man by his own free will would help to bring to pass. Necessity was the environment in which man was placed; the circumstances over which he had no control.

Since the Stoics insisted that everything which happens fits into a total pattern which is good, although sickness, poverty, and disgrace are part of life, the individual Stoic was forced to the conclusion that the

pattern might include his own suffering and death. The Stoics solved this problem partially by arguing that such things as illness or a bad reputation were a matter of indifference, because they could not affect a man's virtue, and that a man was self-sufficient in his virtue alone. Throughout Stoic literature, however, there is an undercurrent of sadness, for the Stoics recognized perhaps more clearly than any other philosophic school that the plan for our world often includes the agony and destruction of good men.